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THE OCEANS: OUR FUTURE PASTURES

By ZONIA BABER
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DURING a six months' trip last year to Australia and the South Sea Islands, seventy-nine days were spent upon the desolate Pacific Ocean. Beyond the bird zone that encircles the land the infinity of lonely waterscape was relieved by two whales, a few flying-fish and a small number of albatross. Days passed without a sign of life. Such an experience might well stimulate in any one an intense desire to reclaim this terrible desert, this lifeless expanse of moving monotony. Were the sea well stocked with whale, seal, dolphin and other oceanic mammals, the interest in sea travel would be tremendously enhanced. The pleasure and entertainment of the sailors and travelers would, however, be but a small part of this beneficent reclamation.

Humanity has always been in search of "pastures green"! As land increases in value, the grazing animals are driven farther away from the centers of population to the cheaper lands or regions that are untillable. It would be considered very poor economy to graze land that would produce one hundred bushels of corn per acre. The "moving on" of the "cowboy" is his dominant attribute. Even in Australia, the continent new to European endeavor, the same story is repeated. The land near the settlements that can be cultivated with profit must produce cereals and other vegetable foods; hence the cattle and sheep are driven away into the "back blocks." Just how long this trekking of the cowboy can continue can not be stated in years. Yet it does not require a very fertile imagination to see that the time is not indefinite. When the human race takes the next step in progress and changes its goal and ideals from *things* to *people,* from the making of numerous and wonderful things to the production of strong and wonderful people, wars will be found only in the records of the savage past. Then the normal increase of humanity will make it necessary for the earth to produce its maximum of vegetation for food and clothing and the cowboy must be pushed off the land.

In our first geography we learned that the surface of the earth is three fourths water and one fourth land. This fact alone tells us that multiplying humanity must secure a great part of its food from the sea. When we can no longer afford to graze our sheep and cattle on the land, whence can we secure our beef and mutton? A survey of the future reveals this possible meat supply in the marine mammals. If we do not soon take heed, there will be no mammals in the sea to furnish meat. Man has been so criminally or stupidly wasteful of his earthly inheritance that he has bankrupted posterity in many things on both land and sea What a story of a warfare of passive resistance the marine mammals might tell! The history of the whale, manatee, dugong, sea-cow, seal and the walrus would bring the blush of shame to the cheek of the humane reader.

The whale, the largest of living creatures, believed to be the largest animal that has ever lived on this globe, no doubt attracted the attention of the earliest people. In ninth-century European history there is record of whaling. Yet it did not become a serious matter from the standpoint of the whale until the sixteenth century. Then the French and the Spanish greatly enhanced their riches through the products of the whale that frequented the western coast of Europe. Whaling became a great European business in the seventeenth century. After the right or baleen whale was found in such great numbers by Henry Hudson in 1607 during his first voyage to Greenland and uninhabited islands of Spitzbergen, the center of whale-fishing was transferred to that region. A thousand or more were slaughtered there yearly for many years. Writing of this period in 1820, William Scoresby said that the whale-fishing "proved the most lucrative and most important branch of natural commerce which had ever been offered to the industry of man." In 1814 a Scotch whaler is reported to have secured a catch valued at $102,840. Such rewards greatly stimulated the whaling industry. "Killing the bird that lays the golden egg" has never proved to be good business. The city of Smeerenburg in Spitzbergen, that grew to a population of 20,000 people in consequence of the whaling industry, was deserted when the whales were gone.

When the Pilgrim Fathers came to this country the whale was numerous along the coast of New England and became an important industry of some of the colonists. In 1846 the United States had a fleet of 680 whaling-vessels. More than $70,000,000 was then invested in this industry. Such slaughter naturally depleted the number of whales in the Atlantic Ocean. The whalers then found their way around the Horn to reap rich harvests in the Pacific. Scammon says in his "Marine Mammals" that in the early fifties of the nineteenth century from 30,000 to 40,000 California or gray whales passed along the coast of California annually. These graceful creatures, forty or more feet in length, passed along the coast within observational distance from the shore between November and May. Large numbers of females came into the lagoons to bring forth their young. There the whalers took advantage of the affection of the mothers for their young to lead them to their death. To-day one may travel for thousands of miles in the Pacific without sighting a single whale.

The whale has been valued by commercial people for oil extracted from the insolating blubber that envelops the animal's body, and for the baleen, or whalebone, that hangs like a curtain supported from and extending around the upper jaw. The price of these commodities has greatly fluctuated. The price of whalebone has varied from 12 cents per pound in 1821 to $6.70 per pound in 1891. In many catches in past times the blubber only was saved, as the whalebone was not considered worth the trouble in taking, and the space occupied aboard. After the discovery of kerosene, oil became so cheap that only the whalebone was saved from many a catch.

One valuable product has for the most part been overlooked. At the whaling station at Green Bay, Spitzbergen, in the year 1910 they were saving the baleen and blubber, but throwing away the meat, which looked like good beef, to the apparent delight of thousands of seagulls. It was estimated that the meat of a whale about sixty feet long, that was being flensed, was equal to that of seventy head of cattle. Is it not criminal to waste this nutritious meat when there are thousands of hungry people? Japan, thrifty and adaptable, has used this valuable food for many years. A few years ago fresh whale meat sold in their market at 7 to 15 cents per pound, according to quality. All varieties are not equally prized for food. That which can not be sent to the city markets in good condition, owing to the weather or distance, is canned at the stations. It is reported that some whale meat if properly treated can not be distinguished from good beefsteak. A considerable amount of whale meat is utilized by butchers in Norway. Whale meat is also tinned in New Zealand and sold to the native South Sea Islanders.

In spite of the cheapness of oil and the use of steel and featherbone instead of whalebone, the slaughter of the whale continues. The whaling station on the Falkland Islands, alone, reported for 1910–1911 whale product worth $2,042,500.

Other marine mammals also share the fate of the whale. The manatee and the dugong live on vegetable food and must find their pastures of seaweed, algæ, and freshwater plants near the land. This brings them near to their arch-enemy, man, and has resulted in their life histories being almost completed. The dugong, ranging from eight to fifteen feet in length, was very numerous in the tropical seas of the eastern hemisphere. It has always been highly prized for food by the natives of the warm coasts of Asia, Australia and Africa. Although the female dugong produces but one young each year, the extermination of this harmless beast was not threatened till the European appeared, spreading his deadly plague of commercialism. A few manatee may yet be found along the coast or near the mouth of some South American rivers.

The northern sea-cow, the rytina, found at one time in the shallow waters of the Behring Sea, was exterminated by the Russian hunters by 1768. The inactive habits of this sea creature, the palatableness of its flesh, its size—from twenty to twenty-five feet in length, its fearlessness of man, and its affectionate disposition toward its kind, led to its extermination.

The walrus, another huge sea mammal, is unfortunate, from the point of view of his continuing to be an earthly inhabitant, in possessing tusks of which man can make use. It is stated in *The National Geographic Magazine,* March, 1911, that "fifteen years ago walrus tusks from Alaska sold in San Francisco amounted to 10,000. Now the sale is less than 100 per year."

The seal has always been an important, if not the most important, article of diet for all Arctic peoples who have not possessed reindeer; and it must be with a feeling of shame that we read that the Alaskan fur seal, estimated to be 4,000,000 in 1867, was reduced to 150,000 in 1911. We find comfort in the results of the deliberation of the International Fur Seal Conference in 1911 by Great Britain, Russia, Japan, and the United States. These four great powers agreed at that time to give the fur seal a form of protection in the North Pacific Ocean for fifteen years. It is hoped that the knowledge gained by these four seal-killing nations during the two months' deliberation of the Fur Seal Conference will result in the preservation of the seal for all time.

Mankind would be endowed with an abundant food pension if an international closed season could be declared for all marine mammals except the killer whale—the only one that destroys warm-blooded animals—until these valuable sea creatures could multiply in sufficient numbers to replace in part the position in the food supply now occupied by sheep and cattle. This suggestion may meet with strong opposition at first. We are always suspicious of the *new. Newness* explains the attitude of repulsion for any novel food.

Our attitude toward food is almost wholly on the emotional plane. Few people "eat to live"—"we live to eat." The query of the average person in regard to any unaccustomed food is: "Is it good?" meaning, "Does it please the taste?" He does not ask: "Is it nutritious?" "Will it feed the body?" We forget that we have learned to like all food. Some children must be taught to take milk. Persons very sensitive to taste may be slow in learning to like a new and disagreeable taste. But any one who tries can learn to like any food that is not poisonous to him.

The individual who is suspicious or afraid of new ideas, unknown people, strange animals, unusual landscapes, is called provincial. The same term may be applied to the person who can not eat this or that wholesome article of diet. The cosmopolitan has been obliged to eat strange foods when traveling in foreign lands. By so doing he learns to like foods which he thought unpalatable when first introduced.

Hunger of sufficient intensity gives relish to any wholesome food, however strange. Explorers in the Polar regions often have been obliged to eat the flesh of the seal, walrus and whale to save their lives. We have been told that the flesh of the Australian dugong tastes like beef and is easily digested; that when salted it has the flavor of excellent bacon.

Why trouble about these strange sea monsters now? We still have plenty of grazing land! If one may generalize from past records, the sea mammals will be extinct when the grazing lands of the earth are all under cultivation. It is reported that in 1690 an inhabitant of the island of Nantucket, which has very poor soil, looking at the whales playing in the ocean said: "There is a green pasture where our children's grandchildren will go for bread." He considered the ocean from a commercial point of view. We now observe as we look at the waterscape of the world: "There is a green pasture where our children's grandchildren, far removed, will go for meat."

To the credit of humanity it can now be stated that the thinking, ethical nations are setting aside sanctuaries and preserves for birds, other animals, and plants that are liable to become extinct. One nation alone, however far-seeing and altruistic, can not conserve the marine mammals. This is an international concern and it might well be brought before the next international conference at The Hague.